

Draft Report
of the 16th Meeting of the
Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI (ECI-CPR)
(ECI Headquarters, November 17, 2014)

The Council of Permanent Representatives of ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) convened its 16th meeting at the ECO Headquarters on 17th November 2014, under the Chairmanship of the distinguished Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The Meeting was attended by the representatives of Islamic Republic of Iran, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Republic of Tajikistan, as well as delegation of the ECO Secretariat and the ECO Cultural Institute. (List of Participants is enclosed as **Annex. I**).

Agenda item 1

Adoption of the Agenda

The draft agenda of the Meeting which had been circulated among Member States vide Note No. ECI/524/776 dated October 30, 2014 was adopted unanimously as follows:

1. Adoption of the Agenda,
2. Consideration and Adoption of Draft Report of the 15th ECI-CPR meeting,
3. Report by ECI President on the ECI Activities
4. Budgetary Matters:
 - Current Financial Situation in ECI
 - Consideration and Adoption of ECI's Draft Budget for 2015
5. Any other Business
6. Date and venue of the next meeting

Agenda item 2

Consideration and Adoption of the Draft Report of the Previous ECI-CPR Meetings

The draft report of the 15th ECI-CPR meeting was adopted unanimously.

Agenda item 3

Report by ECI president on the ECI Activities

H.E Mr. Iftikhar Hussein Arif, ECI President made the following statement:

***Honorable Ambassadors and Representatives of the ECI Member States,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

It is my pleasure to meet the distinguished delegates of the member states after a while in the Council of Permanent Representatives of ECI to deliberate the significant issues of the Institute.

At the outset, I would like to brief the meeting on some major activities organized over the past months:

- *Holding Allama Iqbal Day function in cooperation with Aiwan-e-Iqbal in Lahore in November 9, 2014*

With respect to the significance of the ECI's delegation's recent trip to Pakistan and their meetings with high ranking authorities of the country, I would like to kindly request H. E. Ambassador Jabbari to deliver a brief report afterwards on the meetings and outcomes of the trips to Lahore and Islamabad.

- *Qawwali Sufi Musical Performance (October 2014), prominent Pakistani Qawwals came, and in cooperation with Pakistan Embassy, we organized this function and attended by many diplomats and presided over by the Secretary General of ECO.*
- *Co-Hosted Seminar on cultural Convergence in Eurasia (October 2014) in cooperation with IRAS and we are publishing the deliberations of the event*
- *The 1st ECO Chess Cup with outstanding presence of top players from all 10 ECO countries (September 2014)- this was the first time the ECO Cultural Institute has arranged an event in sports*
- *Commemoration of Molana, including photo and painting exhibition (September 2014)*
- *Participation in the 27th International Book Fair, Tehran and unveiling of ECI two new publications (May 2014)*
- *Iranian Antique Handicrafts in cooperation with the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organization (April 2014)*

and the other activities which are explained in details in the activity report of the Institute which is available in the documents prepared for the distinguished delegates.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Institute has organized these activities in difficult circumstances; unfortunately only Afghanistan has paid its annual contribution for the year 2014, I avail this opportunity to extend my gratitude to the authorities of the country for their timely measures in this regard. Recently, the distinguished Embassy of Pakistan has informed the Institute that some portion of the country's annual contribution has been deposited. I would like to bring this important issue to your kind notice that shortage of funds and unavailability of the annual contributions of the member states has forced the Institute to reduce its activities, especially in the other member states. On the other hand, the Institute's financial resources in Iranian Rial-equivalent to 200 thousand dollars – voluntarily contributed by the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the year 2014 is also running out.

While emphasizing the dire straits of the Institute, I regret to say that from the next month onwards the Institute will not be able to continue its cultural programs, even its daily routines. We will not even be able to pay the salary of the entire official and local staff for the month of November 2014. Obviously this situation is not pleasant to any member state and will compromise effective and smooth functioning of the Institute.

Excellencies,

My colleagues have already prepared the draft budget of the Institute for the upcoming year and forwarded to the embassies of the member states. The document indicates reduction in ongoing expenditures in favour of program budget while the budget level has undergone a slight increase, the amount of the annual contribution of the member states has remained unchanged.

I kindly request the distinguished member states to consider and approve the draft budget. Since the budget is basically the same as the last two years and the fact that shares remain unchanged, therefore, I believe it can be approved here and now without any difficulty. I would also like to reiterate the necessity for informing the relevant authorities of the member states on the dire financial straits of the Institute and settlement of their outstanding arrears including the annual contribution for the year 2014; payments could be made at scheduled intervals. I also kindly request the distinguished delegate of the Islamic Republic of Iran as the host country to follow up the issue of the ECI's premises through the relevant authorities.

Report by H.E. Ambassador Dr. Mohamad Reza HAJI KARIM JABBARI, Executive Director of ECI on mission to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Programs in Lahore and Islamabad were very successful. The cultural program titled "International Conference on Iqbal" was organized with the collaboration of ECI and the Aiwan-e-Iqbal Complex in Pakistan, for the commemoration of the anniversary of the renowned and prominent figure of the region. The esteemed Embassy of Pakistan played a key role in this program and professor Arif, personally, made much of the coordination in his contacts with the relevant authorities in Lahore and Islamabad.

The program started in Lahore, early in the morning. We went to Iqbal grave to pay tribute to the great poet. Upon ECI's commitment to honor poets and scholars from the ECI member countries, our delegation was including three representatives from three member countries, Iran, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. After paying attribute, we headed to the conference hall. The Federal Minister of Information, Broadcasting and National Cultural Heritage of Pakistan attended this prestigious conference which was well received by a large number of scholars, where students from various universities, cultural centers also attended the conference. The Governor General of Punjab and many other prominent figures, also the daughter-in-law of the late Iqbal attended this conference as well. Statements were made on behalf of the ECI, by the Executive Director, also the Federal Minister and personalities of the province and two members of the ECI delegation made statements.

In my statement, I tried to introduce ECI, its activities and policies, and the future programs which was very well received by the public. I was told that this program was aired by twenty five TV channels live, which has certainly very positive impact for introducing this Institute and its activities.

Further, we had a very historic and unforgettable meeting with the son of the late Iqbal, Dr. Javid in an important cultural institute in Lahore. We had a very good exchange of views and ideas with him. Then the dinner was offered by the Institute of Alhamra which is one of the most important cultural centers of Pakistan. We had also an exchange of views with the scholars there and at the end; we proposed to sign three memorandums of understanding with these important cultural centers of Pakistan.

Then we went to Islamabad for two days. On the first day, we had a very important and fruitful meeting with the Foreign Secretary, His Excellency Chudhari, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Minister was briefed on the objectives and activities of the Institute. He appreciated our works and said that you are in the right direction and I assure you of the full support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. He also raised a question about the

premises of the ECI that I responded accordingly and I promised that we will follow the issue once we are back to Tehran.

Then we had another important meeting with the Acting Minister of Information and Broadcasting. We discussed the possibilities and potentials for mutual cooperation between the ECI and the Ministry of Culture of the Pakistan. We plan to send an official letter to enlist possible areas of cooperation. The idea of organizing an international conference on Iqbal life and thoughts with experts from around the world in the next year was fully supported by Pakistan relevant authorities and the two Ministers.

Later we met the Director General of the National Heritage of Pakistan and visited the National Heritage Museum in Islamabad. We agreed to propose a draft MoU in the near future to be signed for organizing joint activities.

We are grateful to Mr. Zeshan and his colleagues in the Embassy, and Excellency Ambassador Jadmani, for their support and very excellent coordination.

Also we presented some copies of our latest activity report and the new issue of ECO Heritage to the relevant authorities in Pakistan and they were impressed by the quantity and quality of works which have been done during the presidency of professor Arif.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: stated that he was one of the delegates who took part in the International Conference on Iqbal. He appreciated ECO Cultural Institute for its efforts to strengthen bonds of affinity amongst the ECO nations. He hoped that an international conference will be convened in Iran in the upcoming year. He informed that he plans to translate the Iqbal's Urdu poetry into Persian verse by the upcoming year. He further expressed the country's willingness to arrange functions in cooperation with the ECO Cultural Institute over the upcoming year to observe the luminaries of Afghanistan.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: also appreciated the Institute and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for organizing the significant seminar on Allamah Iqbal.

All representatives also strongly appreciated ECI for holding very successful events during 2014 despite of all the financial difficulties.

Agenda item 4

Budgetary matters:

- Current Financial Situation in ECI

ECI President clarified the situation of the financial situation of the Institute in 2014. A table regarding the latest payments of the Member States distributed in the session (**Enclosed as Annex II**). He described the current financial situation of the Institute as alarming. He declared that the Institute would not be able to make payments for its staff's salary in upcoming months. President of ECI also stated that the Institute used to receive voluntary contribution from the Islamic Republic of Iran for a very long time. He requested the esteemed representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to kindly bring the issue to the notice of the concerned authorities that the Institute is in need of special assistance. He requested the Member States to be more cooperative in organizing joint cultural functions to boost the prospects.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: informed the meeting that the Iran's contribution for the year 2014 will be paid as the required administrative and banking procedures are over. He explained that the voluntary financial support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the past was partly due to personal activities and follow-ups of the former authorities of the Institute. As it was the case for the current year.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: also pointed out to the amount of the outstanding arrears of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and declared that the Government has already deposited 60,000\$ out of 171,500\$ Pakistan's share for the year 2014.

President of ECI clarified that despite ECI has been informed by the Embassy, the Institute has not received it yet.

Chairman (Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan) declared that the Member States should consider the issue of ECI budget more seriously; otherwise, the Institute may fail to conduct expected activities.

- Consideration and Adoption of ECI's Draft Budget for 2015

President of ECI: emphasized that the ECI budget for the year 2015 is not exceeding the previous two years budget, therefore, the distinguished Member States are requested to kindly approve it in this session.

Chairman announced the approval of the Council to the ECI's budget for the year 2015 as no objection raised by the representatives of the Member States.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: proposed that ECI may increase its budget to some extent to cover its expanding activities. He declared that the Islamic Republic of Iran is willing to consider the relevant procedures to discuss the issue in the related meetings such as BoT (Board of Trustees), CoM (Council of Ministers) or the ECO Summit.

Agenda item 5

Any other Business,

- 6th BoT Meeting

President of ECI: reminded that the 6th meeting of the ECI Board of Trustees (BoT) was slated to be held in Tajikistan, but has been postponed. He requested the distinguished representative of the Republic of Tajikistan to kindly follow up the issue.

- ECI's premises

President of ECI: raised the issue of ECI's premises. He declared that despite the fact that relevant Iranian authorities have been following up the matter, but no outcome is achieved. He clarified that the Institute was proposed to move to some other premises, but it will not do that until the Ministry of Foreign Affairs requests so. He stated that the Institute is demanding what belongs to it. It should be clarified if it is not ECI's property. He explained that the Institute organizes functions every month or every week which need space. If this premise belongs to ECI and somebody else has taken it, it's illegal. He stressed that he never intends to embarrass Iranian friends since all concerned authorities in Iran have shown sympathy for the issue. Even Dr. Jannati, the Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance, has been very kind. President emphasized that he never brought formally the issue to the notice of Pakistan's Authorities. But now he feels obliged to put that on record and explain the situation. He

expressed that the Institute awaits a reply. He added that recently we have paid the entire electricity bill of the building most of which consumed by the Non-governmental organization of Shams. He requested the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to follow up the issue.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran: declared that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supports the idea that ECI needs a proper premise for its activities and the current available space is not enough for the Institute's event. The Ministry has been following the case through the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. He advised the President of ECI not to hesitate to raise the issue with any other relevant Iranian authorities. He explained that the issue is related to the period of transition in presidency of the Institute, from Mr. Ayyoubi, the previous President, to Professor Arif. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was not informed at that time. He assured that the Islamic Republic of Iran will fully support the Institute. He reiterated that even if the whole building returns to ECI, still the important volume of ECI programs and its importance for cultural cooperation amongst ECO member countries deserves facilities much more important than the present one.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: appreciated the viewpoint of Iran's Ministry of foreign Affairs on ECI's premises. He noted that the issue was discussed at the 24th RPC Meeting, and mentioned in the report of the meeting that the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran will follow up the issue and will provide a proper premise.

- **Meeting of Cultural Attaches**

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan proposed that regarding the organization of functions by ECI, a meeting for cultural attaches of the Member States may be convened. The members of the said meeting may extend their proposals for the upcoming year. The authorities who take part in the above-mentioned meeting will be able to convey the approved programs to the concerned officials in their country for allocation of state funds.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran supported the proposal of the distinguished representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and reiterated the proposal of drafting a calendar of events. If the calendar is provided, all the planned activities of the Institute should obtain the approval of relevant authorities for proper funding.

President of ECI welcomed the proposal to provide a calendar of events for the activities of ECI. Nevertheless, he clarified that there are some unforeseen events that may provide opportunities for cultural activities. Therefore, the calendar will need some adjustments.

- **ECI Staff**

President of ECI requested for the opinion of the council on a specific issue. He pointed that some ECI Member States have not settled their outstanding arrears. Therefore, a proposal comes in this case is that the ECI staff who is from the said Member States, should not receive payments. He noted that the staff members of ECI have been hired on the basis of certain merits and the Institute cannot just remove anybody due to the non-payment of contributions. He further emphasized on the fact that finding a man of culture and diplomat suitable to represent a country is not an easy task. Therefore, the countries' choice of their staff should be respected.

Executive Director of ECI clarified that regardless the provisions of the Charter on the powers and duties of the Executive Director, he is not intervening in the management of the Institute and just follows the instructions of the President and that he has no objection to this.

Regarding the Institutes policy and situation of the staff members, he explained that he made a written and detailed proposal to the President a few months ago which was completely rejected by him.

He further stated that the question is absolutely not to fire staff, but just the necessity of informing member states in detail about the situation. There are some staff members who have not been official members of this Institute for a quite long time and they have not been introduced officially by their countries to this Institute, but they are benefiting from all official staff benefits. For instance, there is a staff member who received one hundred fifty thousand dollars as salary during the past six years, while his country paid one hundred ten thousand dollars during the said period of time. The Institute also has spent around one hundred thousand dollars for cultural activities related to that particular country while the arrears of that particular country amount to about 400,000\$. It means that the Institute has paid more than two hundred fifty thousand dollars during the said period and received only 110,000\$ from that country. The Executive Director noted that he has proposed to contact the officials of that country and explain the situation. He emphasized that it is not fair that the Member States pay for any staff member who is not still considered an official. This case has never been raised in ECI-CPR meetings in the past. I believe this is also the case with some other official staff which must be examined by CPR. So, the question has never been to fire anybody but just to find a solution. However, I have no objection to the decisions made by Mr. President and CPR. He reiterated that this is the right of member states to be informed about the status of affairs in this regard.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran agreed with ECI President that morally, it's not good to suspend the payment of one employee, because of not receiving budget from the country. He further supported the concern expressed by ECI Executive Director in this regard and thus proposed the issue be addressed in detail in the next ECI-CPR meeting.

Representative of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan agreed to the comments made by ECI President and Executive Director as well as the Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran and reiterated that the organization is suffering from financial problems. He then pointed out that if the staff members are not introduced officially by the Member States, so even if the payment is stopped, the Member State will be least pushed.

Agenda item 6

Date and venue of the next meeting.

Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan: emphasized the importance of regular convening of the ECI-CPR meeting in timely manner to give the Member States opportunity to explore the planned activities of ECI and make required adjustments.

President of ECI: stated that the Institute will provide the Member States with a schedule for the 6 upcoming bimonthly meetings and it would be followed subject to the approval of the members.

The council unanimously agreed that the next meeting of the ECI-CPR to be held on Monday December 29, 2014 at 10:00 hours in the Institute.

Annex-I

**The 16th Meeting of the
ECI Council of Permanent Representatives (CPR)**

List of Participants

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:

- H. E. Dr. Naseer Ahmad Noor, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
- Mr. Rahbin, Cultural Attaché

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran:

- H.E. Ambassador Abolfazl Mohammad Alikhani, Director, ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA
- Mr. Nezafat, Senior Expert , ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA
- Mr. Chenari, Senior Expert , ECO Affairs Bureau, MFA

Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan:

- Mr. Muhammad Zeeshan Ahmed, Counsellor

Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- Ms. Manizha Rahimi, 3rd Secretary

ECO Secretariat:

- Mr. Jehanzeb Khan, ECO Assistant Director, International Relations

ECO Cultural Institute:

- H.E. Mr. Iftikhar Husain Arif, President
- H.E. Ambassador Mohammad Reza Haji Karim Jabbari, Executive Director
- Mr. Seyed Majid Ghafelebashi, External Relations
- Mr. Hossein Ali Samadi, Financial Officer